



Educator guide: Stress lesson

Recommended for grades:

4th grade

Time:

10 minutes

National Health Education Standards:

This activity aligns with the following National Health Education Standards:

- Standard 1: Use functional health information to support health and well-being of self and others.
- Standard 4: Use interpersonal communication skills to support health and well-being of self and others.
- Standard 7: Demonstrate practices and behaviors to support health and well-being of self and others.

For more information about the National Health Education Standards, visit the SHAPE America website: shapeamerica.org.

Learning objectives:

After completing this lesson students will be able to:

1. Identify at least two things they can do every day to stay mentally healthy.
2. Identify two personal stressors at home, in school or with friends.
3. Differentiate between positive and negative ways of dealing with stress.

Lesson description:

In this lesson students will learn what stress is and how to manage it in a healthy way. They will hear from other students about what stresses them out and how they deal with it. There is a worksheet for students to complete as they move through this lesson.



Pre and post-test questions:

Use the following questions with your students in any way that you see fit (on paper, using a survey tool, etc.) You may choose to combine questions from various lessons and activities that your students participate in. Correct answer choices are bolded.

1. Which of these is a healthy way to deal with stress? Choose all that apply.
 - a. Avoid friends and family.
 - b. Get less sleep.
 - c. Check your attitude.**
 - d. Learn to relax.**
2. Stress can be good or bad.
 - a. True**
 - b. False

Vocabulary:

Use the following list of vocabulary as a reference for yourself or your students as you complete the Stress lesson. You may choose to use this list in any way that fits your needs.

- Anxiety – a mental health condition when a person worries even though there is nothing to worry about, or worries all the time and it affects their daily life
- Cope – to deal with something
- Stress – feeling worried, nervous, or uncomfortable about something, which can be caused by different situations, pressures or events
- Stress management techniques – things you can do when you're feeling stress, such as deep breathing, taking a break, asking an adult for help, etc.

Stress lesson worksheet

Name: _____ Date: _____

Instructions: Complete this worksheet as you move through the Stress lesson.

1. What is stress?

2. List three examples of things that can cause stress for kids your age.

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

3. List two healthy ways to deal with stress.

a. _____

b. _____

4. List two adults you can go to if you need help dealing with stress.

a. _____

b. _____



Stress lesson worksheet answer key

1. What is stress?

Stress is feeling worried, nervous or uncomfortable about something. It can be caused by different situations, pressures or events. Stress is the body's way of preparing to deal with a tough situation to the best of our abilities.

2. List three examples of things that can cause stress for kids your age.

Answers will vary, but could include any of the following: tests, school, friends, sports, illness, family problems, siblings, etc.

3. List two healthy ways to deal with stress.

Answers will vary, but could include any of the following: eating healthy foods, getting regular exercise, getting a good night's sleep, learning to relax, breathing techniques, doing something you enjoy, walking your dog, listening to music, checking your attitude, etc.

4. List two adults you can go to if you need help dealing with stress.

Answers will vary, but could include any of the following: parent, relative, teacher, school counselor, etc.

Supplemental activity: Managing stress

Objectives:

After completing this activity students will be able to:

- Identify two personal stressors at home, in school, or with friends.
- Differentiate between positive and negative ways of dealing with stress.
- Create a personal list of stress reduction techniques to use when they are feeling stressed.

Materials needed:

- White board or SMART board
- My personal stressors worksheet (included below)
- Stress reduction techniques handout (included below)
- Index cards
- Hole punch
- 1" binder rings or stapler
- Pens, pencils, crayons or markers

Time required:

40 minutes

Instructions:

In this activity students will think about specific things or situations that cause them stress, and different ways to deal with their stress. Begin by brainstorming a list of stressors and list them on the white board or SMART board. Discuss with students that everyone is different, and something that may cause stress for one person may not cause any stress for someone else. The important thing is for students to identify their own personal stressors.

There are lots of different ways to deal with stress. Some ways can be healthy, and some can be unhealthy. Review with students several healthy ways to deal with stress, such as taking deep breaths, talking to a trusted adult, getting outside, taking a break, etc. Give students a few specific examples that they can relate to. For example, when your younger sibling won't leave you alone, it can be healthy to take a break from them, but it can be unhealthy to punch a wall.

Next, give each student the My personal stressors worksheet. Make students aware that this worksheet will be just for them, and they will not be turning it in. After allowing students time to complete their worksheet, give each student 4-7 index cards and a copy of the Stress reduction techniques handout. Students will be creating their own stress reduction cards, based on what they think will work for them. Students can decorate the first index card however they would like as a title page for their booklet.

For the remaining index cards students should write down one stress reduction technique (either from the Stress reduction techniques worksheet or from their own personal experience) per index card. These should be things that the student thinks will work for them in a stressful situation. Some students may find more techniques than others so there will be some variation between students.

Once the index cards are complete either use a hole punch and a binder ring to finish them into a "book" or staple the cards together. Using a hole punch and binder ring, however, would allow students to re-visit their personal stress reduction techniques later and adjust them as needed based on what works, or doesn't work, for them.

My personal stressors worksheet

Name: _____ Date: _____

Instructions: Think about the times that you've felt stress over the last week. Be specific in your answers.

1. I felt stress when:

Where was I? _____

What was I doing? _____

Who was I with? _____

2. I felt stress when:

Where was I? _____

What was I doing? _____

Who was I with? _____

3. I felt stress when:

Where was I? _____

What was I doing? _____

Who was I with? _____



Stress reduction techniques

There is no one right solution for stress management. What works for one person may not work for another. Listed below are many different strategies that may work for you. You can add your own ideas to the list too. Try a few and see what works best!

- Take a break.
- Count to ten.
- Talk to someone.
- Do something different.
- Cut an activity out of your day.
- Make time to do something you enjoy each day.
- Practice mindfulness.
- Take deep breaths.
- Listen to music.
- Get some physical activity.
- Find a hobby.
- Write down your thoughts and feelings.
- Take one step at a time.
- Encourage yourself.
- Do something creative, such as writing, painting, drawing, etc.
- Eat healthy foods.
- Eat regular meals and snacks.
- Cuddle with your pet.
- Walk your dog.
- Get outside.

- _____
- _____
- _____



Handouts

Included on the following pages are additional resources that you and your students' families may find useful.



Anxiety disorders in children

What are anxiety disorders?

Children with anxiety disorders have too much fear and worry that lasts a long time. Children with anxiety often have problems at school or home because of it.

A small amount of anxiety is normal in childhood. At different ages, some fears are common like fear of being away from parents and fear of the dark. Children can also have anxiety when they are in new or stressful situations.

Children can have so much anxiety it causes problems.

Some children:

- Have aches and pains, like headaches or stomachaches
- Feel restless, tired or tense
- Have trouble focusing or sleeping
- Can also have tantrums or meltdowns because of anxiety

What causes anxiety disorders?

There are many reasons why a child may have anxiety. It can run in families and start at birth. It can also start after exposure to stressful events and problems meeting developmental milestones.

What are the symptoms of anxiety disorders?

Children with anxiety may:

- Be very upset when caregivers leave them
- Be very shy and quiet in new situations and with people not in their family
- Stay away from places or activities that make them feel nervous
- Worry a lot about many things, and not be able to control the worry
- Talk about or ask questions about the things they worry about
- Not talk in stressful places, but talk easily at home
- Feel very scared of certain things like animals, heights, being in an airplane or seeing blood



How are anxiety disorders treated?

Anxiety will not get better without help. Treatment for mild anxiety starts with psychotherapy. In psychotherapy a health care provider helps your child by understanding how they think and feel about things.

Children will learn to:

- Replace their anxious thoughts with helpful ones
- Control their anxious feelings with coping skills

Your child will need to practice what they learn outside of sessions. This is an important part of therapy. Parents are often part of therapy sessions so they can help their child practice the skills. Psychotherapy is usually done by psychologists, mental health counselors and clinical social workers.

- Medicine can help decrease feelings of anxiety. Medicines may be prescribed to help your child's anxiety.
- For moderate to severe anxiety, treatment that uses psychotherapy and medicine together may be most helpful.

How can I help my child's anxiety?

- Be with your child and support them during stressful times. If your child gets anxious remain calm. Have them take deep and slow breaths. They can pretend they are blowing up a balloon. Do not let your child pass up things that raise their anxiety.
- Ask your child to talk about their worries. You can tell them what you saw that made you think they were anxious. For instance, if their body shakes when they are anxious, this is called a non-verbal cue. Do not tell your child not to worry.
- Have a daily routine or use a schedule so your child knows what to expect.
- Praise your child for facing fears and being brave in stressful situations.
- Talk with your child's school to let teachers know how they can help your child practice using their coping skills. If anxiety causes problems for your child at school a special plan called a 504 Plan or IEP may be needed.



Recognizing depression in children

What is depression?

Depression is a mood disorder that affects the way you think and feel. The most common symptom is a feeling of deep sadness. People who are depressed may also:

- Feel hopeless
- Feel that life isn't worth living
- Have thoughts of suicide or death

Depression in children

Children as young as age 6 may feel depressed. But they can't always tell you how they feel. Instead, your child may:

- Eat more or less than normal
- Sleep more or less than usual
- Seem unable to have fun
- Think or speak about suicide or death
- Seem fearful or anxious
- Act in an aggressive way
- Use alcohol or other drugs
- Complain of stomachaches, headaches or other pains that can't be explained
- Have problems at school or home

What can you do?

Children with depression can be helped with treatment. Here are some ways you can help:

- Talk with your child's healthcare provider about medicine and psychotherapy. Both can help.
- Look for mental health resources at your child's school, local mental health center, social service agency or hospital.
- Let your child know that they will not feel this way forever.
- Offer your love and support.
- If your child talks about death or suicide, seek help right away.



Resources for families and educators

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), [cdc.gov/childrensmentalhealth/](https://www.cdc.gov/childrensmentalhealth/)
- Children's Wisconsin, [childrenswi.org](https://www.childrenswi.org)
- KidsHealth, [kidshealth.org](https://www.kidshealth.org)
- Mental Health America, [mhanational.org](https://www.mhanational.org)
- National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), [nami.org](https://www.nami.org)
- National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), [nimh.nih.gov](https://www.nimh.nih.gov)
- PBS Kids for Parents: Emotions and Self-Awareness, [pbs.org/parents/learn-grow/all-ages/emotions-self-awareness](https://www.pbs.org/parents/learn-grow/all-ages/emotions-self-awareness)
- Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (Student Services/Prevention and Wellness), dpi.wi.gov/sspw



Transcript

Slide 1

Zoe: I often hear adults talking about how stressed out they are. Well, you know what? Kids can feel the same way!

Miguel: I agree! Sometimes I get stressed when I have to talk in front of the class, or before a big test.

Zoe: Me too! We're going to learn all about stress, what causes it for kids our age, and what we can do to manage it. But first, make sure you open the worksheet and either save it or print it. Complete this worksheet as you move through this lesson.

Slide 2

Stress is feeling worried, nervous or uncomfortable about something, and it can be caused by different situations, pressures, or events. Stress is the body's way of preparing to deal with a tough situation to the best of your abilities.

Slide 3

Stress can be good or bad. For example, feeling a little stress over giving a presentation at school can be good because it motivates you to work hard and prepare for it.

But, too much stress isn't good for anyone. Pressures that are too intense, or happen a lot, can cause people to feel overwhelmed. Examples of this type of stress include: problems at school, problems at home, a family member being sick or losing a pet. Too much stress can affect your sleep, your eating habits, and you can end up having headaches or stomachaches.

Slide 4

Miguel: We wanted to find out what kids your age are stressed about so we grabbed our camera and talked with some 4th graders. Check it out.

Video:

Something that stresses me out is when I have to come home to my baby brother and my dog that I have to take care of and feed.

Some things that stress me out the most is probably school and football.

My brothers stress me out because they're always mimicking me and following me around.

I have type 1 diabetes so when I'm at school we have a thing called a time test so you have five minutes to do 100 questions. And when I go low I have to stop and eat something that then I have to wait a little while and I can't finish my work.

Some things that stress me out are school and with school it's math, tests and teachers and it's kind of hard I guess.

Homework definitely and school work. School work, you know, math definitely. Not my favorite subject.

Some things that stress me out are school and the standardized tests at school.

Math stresses me out the most because sometimes when you do long division problems and short multiplication problems it's kind of difficult. Because if you get one part of the question wrong you get the whole question wrong.

And sometimes it's with friends because one friend is on one side of the problem and the other is on the other side. And I'm in the middle and they both want me to be on their side I guess. And it's just hard because I don't want to lose a friendship but I don't also want to make a person feel bad.

Some things that stress my out is my brother because he always tries to go through my stuff and go on my stuff.

So basically school is my most stressful point because of it's very hard to make new friends and there's a whole lot of homework and tests. So usually on homework it's kind of hard for me since I'm not the smartest kid in the grade so I just persevere and get through it.

Well my brother and sometimes at school I stress about my friends.

So I was involved in a lot of activities last year. One of them was this thing called math Olympics when you get to compete against other schools extra math, I was also in the spelling bee, I was on the volleyball team, I tried out for basketball. I'm doing basketball now.



When the guidance counselor comes in and tells us just to take deep breaths. That kind of irritates me and stresses me out because that doesn't really help me. And also my baby brother Noah because he doesn't listen and I feel like he's going to get hurt or something because he doesn't want to listen.

Something that stresses me out are basketball because I don't know if I'm going to make the shot or the team.

All my friends are on multiplication or division. I'm only on subtraction still.

Another thing that stresses me out is my chores because I just want to watch TV, I don't want to do them.

Pop quizzes because you don't know when you're going to have them.

Okay so my mom rushes me in the morning all the time .Like rushing me to get done with breakfast.. I just need to do like a million things in such a short amount of time. You know like do you hair, brush your teeth, take a bath, take a shower like blah blah blah like all that. It's just so, I cannot even deal with it in the morning.

Zoe: Well I think that settles it. Stress isn't something that only affects adults. We need to figure out how to deal with all this stress.

Slide 5

Sometimes you may feel stress because you are simply too busy. Lots of activities, even if they're all fun, can make you feel stressed. If this is the case for you, it's time to think about cutting out an activity or two. Find a trusted adult to talk to, and they can help you decide what's best for you.

Slide 6

It's important to learn how to manage stress in a healthy way. Some people have a hard time handling stress, and they may end up trying to cope in an unhealthy way. For example, some people may become angry and take it out on others around them, by yelling, hitting or kicking. Or, they may want to be by themselves a lot. Some people may choose to sleep only a few hours a night, while others may eat too much or too little. None of these things are healthy ways to deal with stress.



Slide 7

Miguel: So let's take a look at some healthy things you can do to keep your stress under control. Check out what these kids said when we asked them how they handle stress.

Video:

To deal with my stress I take naps and play with my toys.

When I do pop quizzes I mediate because it cools me down.

So homework I go in my room because I have a desk up there and then I do it up there.

Sometimes when like I'm having a problem I usually talk to my friends about the problem and they usually help me go along and roll with it

I took a couple deep breaths and I closed my eyes and counted to 10 and I got through the day just fine.

Some ways I deal with my stress is either watching TV to cool down or talking to my mom she'll give me a little pep talk to make me feel better. Stuff like that.

Sometimes I might go to my mom I might go to my dad. I usually like to try and do it by myself but if I can't do it by myself I go to my mom or dad to see if they can help me get through it.

Some things that I do to calm down with my friends is I'll let it go and sometimes I'll even forget about it. And sometimes it'll be stuck in my mind for the rest of the day and I'll go into my room and just take deep breaths, think about it a little bit. Then the next day I'll talk to my friends about it and we'll be all good.

At school when we're taking tests if I don't know the answer I'll close my eyes and take a couple deep breaths and keep trying and trying and trying.

When I'm stressed I like to sing a song in my head to calm me down ya know.

Sometimes on a math test I ask the teacher when I get a bit iffy to do the math problem or it's hard to do the math problem.

Zoe: Wow! Lots of great ideas! Keeping your body and mind healthy keeps you at your best, which means you'll be able to deal with stressful situations better.



Slide 8

Zoe: It's important to remember that nobody's perfect. Don't expect yourself, or others, to be perfect. That just adds to your stress level.

Miguel: And, when you need help, reach out to the people who care about you. Talk to a trusted adult such as a parent, other relative, a teacher, or a school counselor. Tell them you need help. And if the adult you choose is too busy to talk, ask if there's a better time, or find a different trusted adult to talk to.

Zoe: That's right! Adults can help you try to figure out the best way to deal with things. And don't forget about your friends. They can be good listeners too, and they may even be going through some of the same things you are.

Miguel: We better go. See you soon!



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